

# *City of Miami Gardens*

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Miami Gardens, Florida 33169



Mayor Shirley Gibson  
Vice Mayor Oscar Braynon II  
Councilman Melvin L. Bratton  
Councilman Aaron Campbell Jr.  
Councilman Ulysses Harvard  
Councilwoman Sharon Pritchett  
Councilwoman Barbara Watson

## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Mayor and City Council

**From:** Dr. Danny O. Crew  
City Manager

**Date:** March 13, 2006

**Re:** Police Report

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As City Council is aware, we are fast approaching the time when the City can decide whether or not to establish our own local police department. About 6 months ago, I hired Yocelyn Galiano Gomez as a Special Projects Administrator to assist me in the preparation of a report looking at the feasibility and advisability of doing so. That report is now completed and provides a good basis for City Council to make this decision.

The decision on whether to start a Miami Gardens Police Department will not be an easy one. While it may provide significant benefits to the residents in the long run, it also comes with a price, and a number of challenges that must be overcome. On the positive side, I believe that a local police department where we set the priorities can play a significant role in ensuring that we are addressing the needs of Miami Gardens. A local department will allow us to integrate our overall public safety efforts in ways that we cannot really do with an outside agency. Additionally, I believe that having our own department will enable us to save a considerable amount of taxpayer dollars that could be used to address our own priorities in a significant manner. I will discuss this further later in this memo.

One problem we have with the current arrangement with the Miami-Dade Police Department is that of employee assignment, in particular, the City's effective lack of a say in who comes and who goes within the department. We have on many occasions seen some of our best officers transferred away from us without any say on our part. Until we have our own department, we will continue to be staffed at the convenience of officials who have a countywide priority (as they should) and not a Miami Gardens priority.

As indicated above, the decision to start our own police department also has its downside, the most visible of which is that it will require a significant increase in revenue to fund the FY 06-07 transition year (next

fiscal year). While I believe that ultimately, our own department will save us approximately \$3 million per year, it will be necessary to raise \$3 million plus next year in order to bridge the transition period. Once the transition year is completed, the need for this extra revenue goes away depending on how City Council chooses to address the question of additional officers and police resources.

It should be noted, that if Miami-Dade County treated the City of Miami Gardens as it does 30 other cities in the County, there would be no need for any increase in revenue. As you know, we are required to pay for Specialized Police Services while no other major city has this burden: Not Miami, not Hialeah, not Miami Beach, not North Miami, not Homestead, etc. This \$7 million expense faced by none of these other 30 cities has guaranteed that Miami Gardens will always remain a financial hostage to the County. If these funds were available for us to use, we could bridge the transition year without the need for additional revenue and could hire all the officers we need to ensure the safest community possible for our residents.

Even a bigger challenge we will face if City Council chooses to move forward is that of recruiting sufficient officers to initiate operations. Starting a city and hiring 10 or 20 police officers is a challenge in today's atmosphere of police officer shortages; but trying to hire 150 officers is going to be extremely difficult at best. We will have to be very creative to have a chance of meeting this challenge.

There are so many implications of this decision; I believe it would be helpful to have a workshop on the issue. In addition, City Council may want to consider setting aside a portion of the workshop for public input.

**Recommendation:** To hold a workshop on the concept of starting a City of Miami Gardens police department.